of issue on all city pairs where there is no change of aircraft and flight number, except the following:—

1. Delhi-Thiruvananthapuram or vice versa
2. Delhi-Coimbatore or vice versa
3. Delhi-Kochi or vice versa
4. Delhi-Kozhikode or vice versa.

**Task Force on air service in NER**

2194. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a Task Force was constituted to examine and make recommendations for improving airport infrastructure and airlinks in North-Eastern Region;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Task Force has also recommended the development of Silchar Airport runway; and

(d) if so, what is the status of the developmental work of the Silchar airport?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Government had set-up a Task Force to examine and make recommendations to facilitate improved airport infrastructure and airlinks in the North Eastern Region in December, 1998. The Task Force recommended to upgrade the infrastructure facilities at the AAI and Defence airports in North Eastern Region where scheduled airlines are operating, such as extension and upgradation of runways, expansion and construction of new terminal building, provision of modern, navigational landing aids, acquisition of additional land, removal of obstacles, provision of night landing facilities, introduction of 50 seater aircraft, inter-connectivity with the airports and operation of helicopter services etc. Most of the works recommended by the Task Force have been completed at all the airports and civil enclaves owned by AAI except at Silchar (Civil Enclave) and Dibrugarh. Installation of ILS is in progress at Dimapur and Lilabari.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) The works for strengthening and extension of runway with allied works have been awarded on 4th March, 2005.

**Decline in international fares**

2195. SHRIMATI SUKHBUNS KAUR: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether due to Government's decision to open up the global skies by allowing competition from private airlines and by liberalising air connectivity with outside world international airfares from India have sharply comedown;

(b) if so, how far the international air fares have come down during 2004-2005, with respect to Al, the national carriers; and

(c) how it is likely to affect Air India's and Indian Airlines' profitability and viability indicating comparative profit and loss figures of Al and IA during 2002-2003,2003-2004 and 2004-2005?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) With increase in international connectivity to/from India and greater competition between airlines, fare levels on international sectors have come down sharply, which has benefited the passengers travelling to/from India on international routes. Air India has aiso reduced its fares by 10 per cent to 20 per cent on different routes to remain competitive.

(c) In order to achieve profitability/viability both Air India and Indian Airlines would need to offer competitive fares and reduce costs. The profit/loss figures for Air India/Indian Airlines are as follows:

| | Air India (Rs. Crore) | Indian Airlines (Rs. Crore) |
|---|---|---|
| 2002-2003 | 133.86 | -192.56 (loss) |
| 2003-2004 | 92.33 | 44.17 |

**Airport in Ludhiana**

2196. SHRI VARINDER SINGH BAJWA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state: